

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTION OF  
BLACK PIONEER ALTHEA GIBSON

## HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 2, 2007

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce a story from the New York CARIB News of September 18, 2007 entitled, "Black Pioneer Althea Gibson".

This article highlights the accomplishments of Althea Gibson, the admirable tennis player who in spite of adversity reached great success, leaving a great legacy to the sport. Ms. Gibson became the first African American—male or female—to win the U.S. National Championships, which until then was a segregated tournament and she made history by not only breaking the color barriers but by winning the Grand Slam.

Ms. Gibson continued to leave her mark in tennis by winning the 1956 French Open, again, becoming the first black woman to win the Grand Slam event. Following those enormous achievements she continued to excel in important international tennis tournaments such as Wimbledon and the U.S. Championships.

In recognition of her incredible contribution to the sport of tennis and to society, the U.S. Tennis Association hosted a tribute to her life at the U.S. Open in New York in late August. The champion died in 2003 but continues to be admired and to be an inspiration to women throughout the world.

I applaud Ms. Althea Gibson for her great contribution to the sport of tennis and for the undeniable strength she endured to excel in a time when she was denied opportunity because of the color of her skin.

BLACK PIONEER ALTHEA GIBSON

(By Roy S. Johnson)

Fifty years ago, in the late summer of 1957, Althea Gibson made history as she captured the U.S. National Championships title on the grass courts of Forest Hills. With that win, the 30-year-old Gibson became the first African American—male or female—to win that most prestigious Grand Slam tennis tournament crown.

Just three years after the great Jackie Robinson had broken the color barrier in baseball, Gibson broke tennis' color barrier when she played in the 1950 U.S. Championships. Until then, tennis had been a segregated sport, with Blacks playing on their own tour—similar to the Negro Baseball Leagues—under the auspices of the American Tennis Association. Her participation at Forest Hills that year was facilitated, in part, by Alice Marble, one of the top players of that era, who wrote an editorial in a national magazine calling for the sport to allow her to compete.

That she did. Tall and lean, Gibson's look and her game resembled that of the elder Williams sister.

"Very graceful, very smooth," says former tennis star, now U.S. Fed Cup captain Zina Garrison, who befriended Gibson in the legend's later years and became a confidante. "She glided around the court. When you look at Venus [Williams], Althea was very much like her."

Six years after her Grand Slam debut, well before the tide of civil rights began to rise throughout America, Gibson made history once again—this time in magnificent fashion—by winning the 1956 French Open to become the first Black to win a Grand Slam

event. The next year, she won Wimbledon and the U.S. Championships, then successfully defended both titles the following year. Gibson teamed with Angela Buxton, a Jewish player from Briton, to win the 1956 doubles championships at the French and Wimbledon. Both women experienced discrimination by their fellow players, but after their triumph at the All-England tennis club, a British newspaper touted: "Minorities win."

All told, Gibson, the daughter of South Carolina sharecroppers, won five Grand Slam singles titles and six Grand Slam doubles crowns, but her impact on tennis—and society—cannot be measured in mere trophy counts. She was a trailblazer of remarkable heart and courage, marking a path for those who would follow her, carrying herself with that special grace and dignity known only to true champions.

"Althea made tennis a better place, by opening doors and opening minds," said USTA president and chairman Jane Brown Grimes. "For that, all of us owe Althea Gibson a debt of gratitude."

In recognition of Gibson's myriad contributions to the sport of tennis and to society at large, the U.S. Tennis Association this year hosted a very special tribute to the late champion, who passed away in 2003 following a long illness. On an extraordinary evening of history and emotion, African-American women who are pioneers in their own fields, and the elite from the world of tennis, gathered to honor and celebrate one of their own. Call her tennis's own Jackie Robinson.

The event, entitled "Breaking Barriers," was held on the opening night, Aug. 27 of the 2007 U.S. Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Queens, NY. It commemorated the 50th anniversary of Gibson's pioneering triumph at the 1957 U.S. National Championships (now known as the U.S. Open), and also provided a stage for Gibson's induction into the prestigious U.S. Open Court of Champions. But the evening proved to be so much more—an acknowledgement of the over-sight of having never before recognized Gibson as a barrier-breaking pioneer, and a unique first-time celebration of the historic firsts achieved by other prominent African-American women.

Nearly two dozen Black women pioneers attended the tribute, including Olympians Jackie Joyner-Kersey (first Black to win back-to-back Olympic gold medals in the Heptathlon) and Dr. Debi Thomas (first Black Winter Olympics medal winner), astronaut Dr. Mae Jemison (the first Black female astronaut), gospel singer Yolanda Adams (first Black female to win the Contemporary/Inspirational Artist award at American Music Awards) and Ambassador Carol Moseley-Braun (first Black female U.S. Senator).

Billie Jean King, whose own pioneering efforts on behalf of female athletes were celebrated at this venue last year, was part of the tribute, as was New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Rachel Robinson, Jackie Robinson's widow. Aretha Franklin, the first Black woman inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, performed at the tribute.

Other trailblazing Black women attending were former poet laureate Nikki Giovanni (the first Black woman to receive the Rosa Parks Woman of Courage award), former Washington, D.C., mayor Sharon Pratt (first to be elected mayor of a major U.S. city), actress Phylicia Rashad (first to win a Tony for best performance in a play), Essence chairwoman Susan L. Taylor (first recipient of the Henry Johnson Fisher award), and businesswoman Sheila Crump Johnson (first to have a stake in three professional sports franchises).

"Althea Gibson dreamed the impossible and made it possible," said Johnson, who

was a BET founder. "She was one of the first African-American women in sports to say, 'Why not me?' She empowered generations [of Black women] to believe in themselves, emboldened us to achieve and attain the unattainable. Her drive, spirit and passion continue to set an example for us today."

"I will always be grateful to her for having the strength and the courage to triumph in extreme adversity," said Venus Williams, a six-time Grand Slam singles champion, who also participated in the tribute. "Her accomplishments set the stage for my success, and through players like me, Serena and many others to come, her legacy will live on."

REMEMBRANCE OF WALT  
CROWLEY

## HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 2, 2007

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, Seattle recently lost a prominent and much loved citizen, Walt Crowley. I would like to insert in the RECORD a statement on his passing from HistoryLink, an impressive organization Walt helped to found.

## REMEMBERING WALT

Walt Crowley, visionary cofounder of HistoryLink.org, passed away on September 21, 2007. Looking back at the rich tapestry of his life and work, one sees that it would take an encyclopedia to document how much of an effect he had upon the city of Seattle and on the state of Washington. Fortunately—and thanks to his efforts—we can do that here at HistoryLink.org, the Online Encyclopedia of Washington State History.

Walt moved to Seattle at the age of 14, when Boeing hired his father. Many of the friends and colleagues who knew him the longest probably met him during his days at the Helix, Seattle's first underground newspaper, for which Walt wrote, cartooned, edited, and even sold copies of out on the street. Whether it was at a social gathering, during a street march, on the campaign trail, or even in the midst of riots, Walt touched the lives of many people, and made numerous friendships that lasted for decades.

Walt's passion for civic activism led to a career in city politics. During a sit-in protest at Seattle City Hall, Mayor Wes Uhlman was so impressed with the young man's wit and political savvy that he hired him. Over the next few years, Walt worked in various city departments, most notably as deputy director of the Office of Policy and Planning, where he often advocated for historic preservation. His love for Seattle grew, based on his awareness of its past.

## THE WRITE STUFF

His skills as a writer opened up new vistas in his career when he formed Crowley Associates Inc. along with Marie McCaffrey, whom he would later marry. The two collaborated on books about the Seattle Aquarium and Pioneer Square, and provided writing and advertising services to numerous political campaigns, voter initiatives, and labor unions. Walt also wrote articles for the Seattle Weekly and was brought further into the public eye when he was hired to conduct bi-weekly "Point-Counterpoint" debates with conservative activist John Carlson on KIRO-TV News.

But it was the history muse that inspired Walt's greatest creative output. His introduction to historical research came when he was hired to write a history of the Rainier Club. He followed this with books about Seattle University, Metro Transit, and Group

Health Cooperative, as well as two of his proudest accomplishments, *Rites of Passage: A Memoir of the Sixties* in Seattle and *The National Trust Guide: Seattle*.

In 1997, he and local historian Paul Dorpat, a dear friend and colleague from their days together at the Helix, tossed around the idea of publishing an encyclopedia of King County history. A book of this size and scope had not been published since Clarence Bagley's tome, written more than 70 years before. Worried that such a venture might prove to be too unwieldy, Walt's wife, Marie, suggested that an online encyclopedia would be a more suitable way to keep and maintain the historical record. Work soon began, and the rest is history . . . or shall we say, HistoryLink.

#### MAKING HISTORY

When HistoryLink launched in 1998, it was the first encyclopedia of community history created expressly for the Internet—an accomplishment that made Walt exceedingly proud. But being the first meant blazing trails where no historians had gone before, not only in designing and organizing the online encyclopedia, but also in competing for funding in a dot-com world. Walt always referred to our efforts as "venture socialism."

Helped along by a hand-picked staff—many of whom still write, edit, and contribute to the site—as well as by a topnotch board of trustees, HistoryLink.org grew to become a success, and in 2003 expanded its coverage statewide. Today it receives more than four million hits a month. It is read by students, teachers, journalists, genealogists, history buffs, and anybody who wants to know more about the people and events that shaped Washington's growth and development.

Besides penning some of HistoryLink's books, Walt wrote a large number of essays and editorials on topics that appealed to his interests, including state politics, political shifts, mayoral transitions, municipal ownership, civil violence, Seattle's neighborhoods, streetcars, monorails, aviation, the Space Needle, and even flying saucers. With such a wealth of Walt's words and knowledge and insight contained in our site, we here at HistoryLink.org take comfort in the fact that as we continue to grow and expand our content, we will never lose his voice—even though we have lost a colleague, a mentor, and most of all, our friend.

#### COMMENDING THE 1ST BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM/34TH INFANTRY DIVISION OF THE MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD

SPEECH OF

**HON. BETTY McCOLLUM**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, October 1, 2007*

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, today I rise strong support of H. Con. Res. 185. I join the gentleman from Minnesota, Mr. WALZ in offering this resolution. Our entire State joins together in welcoming home the 2,600 members of the Minnesota National Guard's 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division who recently returned from Iraq.

During the 22-month deployment of the 1/34th BCT, these courageous citizen soldiers served Minnesota and our Nation with honor and dignity. Their service frequently put them in harm's way, and we are grateful for their safe return to their families. Since the war in Iraq began our friends, families and neighbors

who serve in the National Guard and Reserves have seen their dual roles as citizen soldiers expand as they have been called to serve in deployments across the world even as they continue the most important mission of all, protecting us in our communities here at home.

The men and women of the 1/34th have demonstrated an exceptional commitment to our country—a commitment to serve and a willingness to sacrifice in combat operations. Their 22-month activation in Iraq was the longest tour of any military unit to have served in Iraq thus far. These Minnesota soldiers have completed some of the most grueling combat assignments. We should also pause to remember the brave members of this unit who made the ultimate sacrifice during their deployment. Their service and sacrifice will never be forgotten.

My office stands ready to assist all military personnel and their families. I believe strongly that our Federal Government must keep its promise to all those who have served. Providing the necessary healthcare, education, and disability benefits to meet the needs of our veterans is both a responsibly and a moral obligation.

Regardless of where individuals stand on the issues that face this Nation in Iraq we all must continue to support the men and women who volunteer to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces all around the world.

As we welcome home members of the 1/34th, we must also keep in our thoughts and prayers the many active duty military personnel, Reservists and Minnesota Guard members who continue to serve in harm's way in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and elsewhere around the world. I commend each and every one of them for their strength, courage and dedication.

I would like to thank my colleague from Minnesota, Mr. WALZ, for bringing this important resolution to the House floor, and for his service to this country. I commend members of the Minnesota National Guard's 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division.

#### TAIWAN PLANE SALES

**HON. SCOTT GARRETT**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 2, 2007*

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, despite recent aggressive behavior from China, Taiwan's democracy has continued to grow and flourish. I am pleased that this House can come together today in support of Taiwan.

China's industrial buildup in the last decade has been unprecedented. While Chinese citizens have been taking advantage of their increased economic freedom, the Chinese government has been using this economic growth to build up their military and position new and dangerous weapons along the Taiwan Strait.

The Taiwanese request to purchase 66 F-16 fighter planes will assist them in countering the growing threat of Chinese militarism. These weapons will allow the Taiwanese to balance the threat of hundreds of Chinese fighters and bombers that are stationed just on the other side of the Strait.

We have always stood by our friends in Taiwan and today we call on the President to en-

sure that that relationship stays as strong as ever. This House supports protecting the freedom of the Taiwanese people. Today, Taiwan is proof that a nation can successfully move from one-party rule to democracy and maintain its dynamic economy. I am hopeful that Chinese citizens can one day experience the same liberty as their counterparts in Taiwan.

#### WHY INTEGRATION MATTERS

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 2, 2007*

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce two stories written in the Washington Post on September 25, 2007 entitled, "A Little Rock Reminder" and "The Legacy of Little Rock", in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the integration of the school system of Little Rock, AR, by a brave group of Black children who came to be known as "The Little Rock Nine".

Integration has been a long and difficult process here in the United States. Only 50 years have passed since President Dwight Eisenhower decided to send soldiers to protect and defend the newly acquired rights of nine Black students to go to a previously all White school. Those brave Black students who endured the difficulties of starting the process of desegregation in schools in 1957 should be remembered and appreciated today, on the anniversary, and everyday.

It has been proven that integration is a key factor in the success of our society. A school where all races and nationalities work together is giving their students more than classes; they are teaching them the correct way to live, in harmony with the world. In addition it has been proven that an integrated learning environment leads to greater academic success.

Our society today still has a long way to go but it is a much healthier one than 50 years ago. These children were brave enough to understand what their parents and other leaders of their community knew—that they deserve the same rights as the next one; they too are citizens of the United States and all it represents. Their efforts need to be commended.

[From the Washington Post, Sept. 25, 2007]

A LITTLE ROCK REMINDER: NINE PIONEERS  
SHOWED WHY SCHOOL INTEGRATION MATTERS  
(By Juan Williams)

Fifty years ago this week, President Dwight Eisenhower risked igniting the second U.S. civil war by sending 1,000 American soldiers into a Southern city. The troops, with bayonets at the end of their rifles, provided protection for nine black students trying to get into Little Rock's Central High School. Until the soldiers arrived, the black teenagers had been kept out by mobs and the Arkansas National Guard, in defiance of the Supreme Court's 1954 ruling ending school segregation.

The black children involved became the leading edge of a social experiment. Their lives offer answers to the question of what happens to black children who attend integrated schools, a question underscored by the recent Supreme Court ruling that voluntary school integration plans in Louisville and Seattle are unconstitutional.

The June decision said a focus on mixing students based on their skin color violates every student's right to be judged as an individual without regard to race. The ruling